

President's Input

We are nearly one year from the start of the COVID quarantine and slowly getting back to something that will be a bit different than normal in February 2020. Many have not made it through this time, but those who have are hopefully encouraged about the future. But there are things that have yet to be worked out. First of all, your Chapter Board and the Illinois Council continue to meet via Zoom. We held a Happy Hour in January featuring a guest speaker from MOAA National—Mrs Gail Joyce, who serves on the Surviving Spouse Committee at National. Some very good words about looking ahead and planning for what will eventually come along for a surviving spouse or the surviving family. If you missed the opportunity, the presentation is available. Please let your request for the presentation be known to anyone on the Chapter Board and we'll provide that to you.

Something else that is changed is MOAA's "Storming the Hill" event. First, the name has

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Treasurer's Report	
Checking Account Balance ...	\$372
Savings Account Balance	\$6,092
Certificates of Deposit	\$15,167
Total	\$21,631



Visit us on Facebook! *(click logo on left)*

Visit our website: www.moaa-swil.org

Send your comments to moaa.swil@gmail.com

2021 USO and Fisher House Donations Drive

Operating In a Pandemic

Let me take this opportunity to tell you about how both the USO of Missouri and Fisher House are fulfilling their respective missions in these strenuous and unprecedented times. In so doing, I aspire to impress you with their exceptional (and successful) efforts and the consequential need for our chapter's above and beyond need to support them this year. First, let's examine how well the "Open for Business" shingle remained in their windows from the start of the pandemic to the present.

The USO did its best to be flexible while supporting the military people and transients and their families in their Missouri and Illinois service area. It was forced to close for a few weeks in April because of shelter-in-place orders. When they reopened, the satellite Terminal 2 facility remained closed for numerous exigency reasons. It is still closed. The main Terminal 1 facility had to limit its hours of operation based on its ability to staff the facility particularly with volunteers, many of which became restricted or inhibited by the pandemic. It did not shut down again. The Fort Leonard Wood facility has been closed for much of the pandemic, as its operation is controlled by post restrictions and quarantine requirements. Thus, the two USO mobile units were pressed into greater service.

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This Month's Program

Due to the current Illinois restrictions on gatherings, we will not hold a March 2021 Meeting.

WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT IN-PERSON RESTRICTIONS WILL BE LIFTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, SO ALL IN-PERSON MEETINGS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE ARE CANCELED.

WE WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED ABOUT FUTURE PROGRAMS IN THE NEWSLETTER.

As you know, we didn't have our annual Scholarship Charity Auction in December. We asked you to donate the money you would've bid on the gifts--thank you to those of you who did.

It's not too late to donate if you haven't already.

Send donations by check to: SW IL MOAA, PO Box 735, O'Fallon IL 62269

Upcoming Programs (all are tentative due to pandemic restrictions)

Date	Venue	Topic
Apr 2021	None	None
22 Apr 2021	Virtual	MOAA SW IL Virtual Happy Hour, Topic: Aging Successfully
May 2021	TBD	Annual Business Meeting
Jun 2021	None	None

If you normally receive the newsletter via email, but received it in the mail, then we don't have your correct email address. Send your name and correct email address to moaa.swil@gmail.com.

Reminder: Please review your chapter membership status and send in your local chapter dues, \$8 per year. Send to Southwest Illinois MOAA, PO Box 735 O'Fallon, IL, 62269.

USO/Fisher House Donations (continued)

These “USO on the Go” units provided services at homecomings, deployments, field training exercises, moral events, military family days, etc., all at no charge. In other words, the USO pretty much stayed in business.

Fisher House never closed its doors during the entirety of the pandemic. In fact, they opened other doors. The necessity to work in family units and to maintain socially distancing between families and staff and volunteers obliged them to make agreements with the local Drury and Hampton Inns to house qualified guests. These are guests in need of lodging for only five days or less. Fisher House guests include veterans and their families and active duty men and women and their families. Just like the USO, Fisher House had to make adjustments and compensations due to the limited availability of and restricted use of volunteers. In essence, Fisher House hasn't miss a beat.

Next, while sustaining operations in the whole new world of a pandemic, let's take a look at how well the USO and Fisher House did in 2020 and will, I am sure, continue to do in 2021.

At the USO:

- The USO distributed nearly one million units of necessary food and supplies to those quarantined on post at Fort Leonard Wood.
- The two USO mobile units made 54 engagements throughout the service area in 2020, traveling 7,140 miles and serving about 11,000 service members and their families.
- The number of USO volunteers was reduced to 672 throughout the year, but they still provided about 21,000 hours to the mission. Their average age is 62 years old.
- The holiday season saw over 5,300 outbound and about 3,000 inbound service members served at the St. Louis Lambert IA from just the main James S. McDonnell facility.
- The annual Santa Drop event entertained about 300 military kids at Busch Stadium while practicing all CDC protocols.
- A new 2020 addition, the USO's “Give Thanks” program, provided 2,750 Thanksgiving meals to qualifying military families at grade E-5 or below located in the service area.

At Fisher House:

- The off campus guest accommodations were costly – approx. \$40,000 of new expenses in 2020.
- An additional cost for housing off campus was about \$15,000 for transportation and special needs.
- About \$5,000 in restaurant gift cards helped feed the off campus guests. (Note: These three exceptional costs were authorized by the Board and partially offset by the Board and the national organization.)
- Since volunteers and multiple families were restricted from use of the Fisher House kitchen, donated meals, purchased meals, and more gift cards helped fill the need for timely meals.
- With guests confined to their rooms, more videos, computer and board games, and puzzles were purchased to provide distraction and entertainment.
- With expenses soaring, Fisher House has not increased paid staff during the pandemic.

From the above, I hope you are convinced that every dollar and every “Wish List” item given to either organization is very much needed, very much appreciated, and very well used.

I must give gratitude and respect to Mandy Pratt, Director of Development for USO of Missouri, and Vannecia Brown, St. Louis Fisher House Manager, for their contributions to this article enthusiastically provided and for their dedication to the grand patriotic missions they lead.

Nick Wartonick

The 117th Congress has officially started, and are considering several key bills.

Take Action!

These important issues require your immediate attention. Contact your elected officials today.

(Note: for more details about issues you can carry to our legislators, see the *Take Action* article in *Council and Chapter News*, or go to <https://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/?0>)



Watch for the opportunity to send a message to Congress in the coming months on the bills listed here.

- [Federal - HR 5995](#): A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to expand eligibility to certain military retirees for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay or combat-related special compensation, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - HR 413](#): A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the work opportunity credit to small businesses which hire individuals who are members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - HR 847](#): A bill to provide interim appropriations for the Coast Guard Retired Serviceman's Family Protection and Survivor Benefits Plans for each fiscal year after fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - S 3393](#): A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay for disability retirees with fewer than 20 years of service and a combat-related disability, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - S 21](#): A bill making continuing appropriations for Coast Guard pay in the event of an appropriations act expired prior to the enactment of new appropriations (official title to be confirmed).
- [Federal - S 1047](#): A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to create a dependency and indemnity compensation allowance for surviving spouses receiving dependency and indemnity compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - S 2216](#): A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to formally recognize caregivers of veterans, notify veterans and caregivers of clinical determinations relating to eligibility for caregiver programs, and temporarily extend benefits for veterans who are determined ineligible for the family caregiver program, and for other purposes.

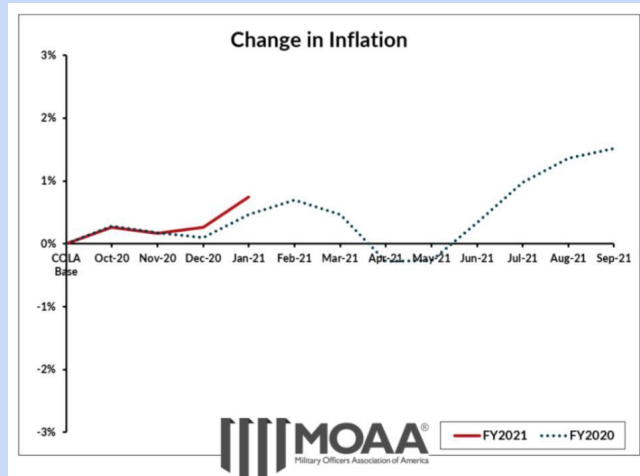
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COLA Watch

moaa.org/content/take-action/cola-watch

The January 2021 CPI is 255.296, 0.7 percent above the FY 2021 COLA baseline.

The Consumer Price Index for February is scheduled to be released March 10. The CPI baseline for FY 2021 is 253.412.



Legislative News (continued)

- [Federal - S 2981](#): A bill to reauthorize and amend the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Act of 2002, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - HR 2406](#): A bill to amend the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Act of 2002 to make certain changes to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's commissioned officer corps, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - S 2629](#): A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect to the Public Health Service Corps.
- [Federal - S 2297](#): A bill to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.
- [Federal - HR 333](#): A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service, and for other purposes.

MOAA Outlines Early Recommendations for Biden Administration

By: Kevin Lilley | January 13, 2021

Leading up to the 2020 presidential election, MOAA asked the candidates for their views on a range of topics in an effort to educate members before they cast their ballots. President-elect Joe Biden offered his perspective on these issues, and as Inauguration Day nears, it's worth reviewing those statements.

Here are some of the incoming president's statements to MOAA members last year, and a look at how they align with MOAA's advocacy mission.

On the Budget

His Words: Asked about the defense budget, then-candidate Biden said, "At a time when we're winding down our main combat efforts from the last two decades, we need to make smarter investments in our military. We can maintain a strong defense and protect our safety and security for less. The real question is not how much we invest — it's how we invest." He also pledged that his administration would "never balance the budget on the backs of military men and women and their families."

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Chapter Officers	
President	Col (ret) Bob Norman
2nd VP/Comm	Maj (ret) Rick Sunner
Secretary	Lt Col (ret) Ann Morey
Treasurer	Col (ret) Bob Koss Col (ret) Phil Yavorsky
Membership	Maj (ret) Sabrina Luttrell-Andrews
Programs	Yasemin Koss
ROTC Liaison	CDR (ret) Tim Grout
Spouses Liaison	Narni Cahill

Call for Articles! If you want to submit an article for the Eyes to the Skies, just send the draft article to me at moaa.swil@gmail.com. Please keep these things in mind:

- Submit your article by the 10th of the month prior
- The article must be in MS Word or text format

We reserve the right to edit the article so it fits in the newsletter and meets our (and MOAA's) editorial policy.

Editorial Policy

The Southwest Illinois Chapter Newsletter is published monthly by the Southwest Illinois Chapter which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are nonpartisan.



Legislative News (continued)

On Military Pay

His Words: “We need to ensure that our military pay raises keep pace with increased costs of living,” then-candidate Biden said. “In my administration this will be a high priority. We must keep faith with the men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving their country.”

On Military Families

His Words: “Despite consistent pay increases in recent years, some military families are still struggling to make ends meet, and even report food insecurity, lack of quality child care, and poor financial health,” then-candidate Biden told MOAA, adding that he would back legislation to “provide an additional allowance for military families living below the poverty line.”

On Veteran Benefits

His Words: Then-candidate Biden told MOAA he “would commit to always providing high-quality care for veterans with service-connected disabilities” and “expand the list of presumptive conditions to ensure that no veteran who experienced a TBI or had exposure to burn pits or other environmental toxins goes without access to VA health care and benefits.”

On DoD Medical Benefits

His Words: “The Department of Defense should not begin any transition of beneficiaries and retirees until further review and data are gathered to ensure that the health care capacity and capabilities of the civilian infrastructure in nearby communities can support a transition,” then-candidate Biden told MOAA. “In order to ensure continuity of care, individuals’ needs should be assessed to make sure that any such transfer does not lower the quality of their health care. In light of the ongoing pandemic and the support that military medical personnel have been providing to communities across the country and overseas, I would also conduct an assessment to ensure that any reductions in medical personnel positions are still supportable.”

To read the full article, which includes MOAA’s Recommendations, read the full article at this [link](#).

New Law Includes MOAA-Backed Protections for Your Military Health Care

By: Karen Ruedisueli | January 13, 2021

After months of coordinated efforts, MOAA was pleased to see the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) conference report includes provisions halting congressionally directed military treatment facility (MTF) restructuring and DoD’s plan to cut military medical billets. Both provisions also require DoD to conduct rigorous analysis and mitigation planning before downsizing or restructuring the military medical system.

The William M. (Mac) Thornberry NDAA for FY 2021, H.R. 6395, includes two key provisions addressing military medical downsizing.

Section 717 prohibits DoD from cutting medical billets for 180 days following enactment of the legislation. It also requires DoD to conduct a review of the medical manpower requirements for all national defense strategy scenarios, including with respect to both the homeland defense mission and pandemic influenza.

(DoD is also required to submit a report on TRICARE network adequacy and transition plans for beneficiary care related to medical billet cuts. That report, required by the FY 2020 NDAA, still has not been released to the public.)

Continued next page

Legislative News (continued)

Section 718 adds rigorous requirements to DoD's MTF restructuring implementation plans related to access and quality of care available in the civilian provider network, and requires DoD to certify to the congressional defense committees that beneficiaries affected by MTF restructuring will have access to civilian care through the TRICARE program. This provision also prohibits DoD from moving forward with MTF restructuring for 180 days following submission of implementation plans and certification of civilian care availability.

Although we are gratified to have achieved our goal, our work on military medical downsizing is not done.

MOAA has always supported Congressionally directed reforms aimed at improving medical readiness, even if those reforms require downsizing or closing MTFs that do not effectively support the readiness mission. MOAA supports these changes as long as beneficiaries can still access high quality care from civilian providers in the local community. Click this [link](#) for the full article.

DoD Needs to Improve How It Calculates BAH, Auditors Say

By: Karen Jowers, Military Times | January 29, 2021

A new report on Basic Allowance for Housing supports some service members' suspicions that they may be getting the short end of the stick when it comes to how much of their rent is covered by the military, says one advocate.

The report, released by the Government Accountability Office, says defense officials need to do a better job collecting and monitoring the data used to set rates for Basic Allowance for Housing, to make sure the rates accurately reflect the cost of suitable housing for service members.

"If DoD does not assess its process for collecting sample units, the department will continue to be limited in its ability to set accurate BAH rates," stated the Jan. 26 GAO report.

The report "supports service members' suspicions that BAH rates haven't been correctly calculated in some instances," said Sarah Kline, an Army spouse who is a housing advocate in the Military Housing Advocacy Network. She has wondered, she said, why the BAH rates for those in the rank of her husband with dependents in the Fort Sill, Okla., area have been reduced by 17 percent — nearly \$300 a month — since 2016. Rental costs in the local area have gone up, she said. (See full article at this [link](#).)

Some Key TRICARE Improvements Contained in NDAA

By: Karen Ruedisueli | January 19, 2021

Fixing TRICARE coverage gaps is a top priority at MOAA because coverage policy is a key driver of the value of the military health care benefit. We were gratified to see the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included several key improvements to TRICARE coverage. Among them:

Maternity Care

The NDAA requires DoD to conduct a demonstration project to evaluate coverage of doula and expanded coverage of lactation consultants under the TRICARE program. Doula are trained professionals who provide physical and emotional support during labor, delivery, and the early postpartum time. It will take some time for the demonstration to go into effect. The legislation requires DoD to submit an implementation plan to Congress within 180 days of the bill's passage.

Other TRICARE Coverage

The legislation also includes digital breast tomosynthesis (3D mammography) as a TRICARE-covered benefit for breast cancer screening.

Continued next page

Legislative News (continued)

The House provision to allow dependents of reserve component members to receive hearing aids from MTFs was scaled back, but it does make dependents enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select eligible for the Retiree At-Cost Hearing Aid Program (RACHAP) offered at select military treatment facilities.

Chiropractic care was also addressed. The conferees noted that DoD has discussed plans to expand TRICARE coverage to include chiropractic care and directed the Defense Health Agency to brief Congress on the expected date of chiropractic coverage within 180 days of enactment of the NDAA.

Click this [link](#) for the full article.

Senators Want To Extend Grace Period For Reinstating Tens Of Thousands Of Retirees' Lost Tricare Select Coverage

By: Karen Jowers, Military Times | February 3, 2021 (See the full article at this [link](#).)

Two senators have introduced legislation to extend the reinstatement period for tens of thousands of military retirees who have lost their health care coverage because they didn't set up their payments for the new enrollment fee.

By law, in order to continue coverage under Tricare Select, retiree sponsors were required to start paying new monthly enrollment fees as of Jan. 1, and they were required to set up a payment plan with their Tricare contractor by the end of 2020 by allotment, bank account or credit card. If they didn't take this action, their coverage was dropped as of Jan. 1, and some may not realize it until they seek medical care and a claim is denied.

The proposal introduced Tuesday by Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., and Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W. Va., would extend the grace period from June to the end of 2021 to allow retirees to reinstate their coverage. Defense Health Agency officials had previously extended the grace period to six months, but military advocates have asked for one year's grace period. As of early January, about 20 percent of this population, or 174,754 out of 872,886 beneficiaries, hadn't taken action to set up their payments, or to actively opt out.

President's Input (continued)

been changed for obvious reasons. It is now "Advocacy in Action" and this year will still be virtual. Normally, the event is scheduled for late March to early April. This year the event will take place in May. Richard Smith will participate with the Council President, Col (ret) Robert Tyler, in taking MOAA's message to the elected representatives. MOAA will stand up a web page next month on moaa.org to cover the issues: 1) Toxic exposure; 2) TRICARE Young Adults; and 3) Basic Needs Allowances (BAQ, BAS, etc.). We're also looking for individuals who may want to contact the representatives, especially the freshman legislators, on these issues as well as give them insight into who and what MOAA is all about. Let me know if you would like to help out in this manner.

Even in this time of masking, quarantining, and limited public exposure, your membership in the Chapter is critical to our continued efforts to support the military community locally, state-wide, nationally, and around the world. Thank you for your participation and I look forward to meeting again face-to-face when conditions permit. God bless you, our elected leaders, our men and women who choose to serve this great country, and the United States of America.

LAST CALL FOR SCHOLARSHIP APPS!

This is the last call for scholarship applications. Applications must be postmarked NLT 4 Mar 2021.

Send them to Ann Morey, PO Box 735, O'Fallon, IL 62269. Any questions, email to ram204@att.net. Message to 618-409-9966, or call 618-628-0286.

Visit the MOAA SW IL Scholarship Info Page at http://moaa-swil.org/pages/scholarships_2021.html

COUNCIL AND CHAPTER NEWS

News from National MOAA

For more information about the articles in this month's newsletter and how you can get more involved in other issues, visit the MOAA [Take Action Center](#) or [News](#) webpages.

- [One MOAA Members Path to \\$1 Million in TSP Investments](#)
- [New DoD Leadership Team Takes Shape](#)
- [What's Next for the Military Shopping Benefit](#)
- [It's Time to Verify Your Tax Withholding](#)

SW IL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

The [VSO](#) provides free assistance to veterans, their dependents, and survivors in navigating complex services and benefits. The nearest VSO is in Belleville, and can be contacted at 618-233-8445/5140.

Visit the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs by following this [link](#).

For information on services available to the aging population, please visit the [Illinois Department on Aging](#).

Use the links below to read some timely veteran-related articles.

- [Send a Vet a Message](#) -- Send a message of support to Illinois Veterans' Homes residents or staff.
- [Illinois Veterans Newsletters](#) -- Award-winning email newsletter created by IDVA, delivers important news and information to the Illinois veteran community. (March 2020 edition at this [link](#).)
- [Operation Rising Spirit](#) -- Challenges service organizations, volunteers, and patriots of Illinois to raise the spirits of military veterans and the heroic staff who care for them at state veterans' homes.
- [Veterans Drivers License](#) -- Veteran's designation helps ensure military veterans receive the services and benefits for which they are entitled.

Pentagon to Study Toxins at K2 Base

By Patricia Kime, Military.com | January 25, 2021

On his final full day in office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Defense Department to study the environmental exposures of U.S. troops who served in Uzbekistan in the early 2000s (Oct. 1, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2005), a step that could pave the way for ill veterans to receive benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

According to veterans assigned there, the base was a toxic cesspool where a thick black liquid seeped through the soil, and a runoff pond and the ground glowed the same shade of green as a glow stick.

A number of veterans who served at the base have developed cancer or other serious illnesses.

A poll of members who belong to a Facebook group devoted to K2 veterans found that, among 1,200 who completed a survey, the cancer rate was 14%. Across the U.S., the probability that men will develop an invasive cancer before age 49 is 1 in 29; for women, it's 1 in 17.

Check out the full article at this [link](#).

Our Chapter's Scholarship Application [\(also found at this link\)](#)

By Ann Morey, LtCol (ret), Dec 2020

SOUTHWEST IL CHAPTER, MOAA
INEZ PETERS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
CWO3 CHARLES E. NALLEY SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____
HOME ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE NUMBER _____ E-MAIL _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN _____
ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE _____
NAME OF CHAPTER SPONSOR _____ RELATIONSHIP _____
HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE CURRENTLY ATTENDING _____
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DATE _____ GPA _____ CLASS STANDING _____
COLLEGE OR SPECIAL TRAINING CREDIT: HOURS _____ SEMESTERS _____
NAME OF COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY ATTENDING or PLANNING TO ATTEND:

APPLICANT SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPLICATION PACKAGE MUST INCLUDE:

(Incomplete packages will not be considered)

- Legibly completed application.
- Two one-page essays, one side, single space, font Times New Roman 12.
 - One-page essay outlining career goals and why the applicant chose or plans to pursue a particular field of study.
 - One-page essay on the applicant's participation in a particular extracurricular, school, or community activity highlighting accomplishments and explaining personal benefit from the activity.
- A letter of recommendation from a member of the school faculty or staff who can comment on your qualifications for your career choice.
- A letter of recommendation from an adult leader of an extracurricular, school, or community activity, organization, club, or employment in which the applicant was active.
- Official high school transcript, reflecting at least three years of high school and including any college credits as applicable. If you are currently enrolled in a college, also include your official college transcript.
- A copy of any and all of your ACT and/or SAT scores.
- A listing of all school and community clubs, organizations, and/or groups to which you are or were a member. Include any leadership positions, honors, and/or awards as applicable with the listed activities. This should also include participation identified in the one-page essay above.

Forward the completed package to:

Southwest Illinois MOAA
PO Box 735
O'Fallon, IL, 62269
Attn: Ann Morey

APPLICATION MUST BE POSTMARKED NOT LATER THAN 4 MAR 2021

Study: Agent Orange Exposure Doubles Risk of Developing Dementia

By: Patricia Kime, Military.com | January 29, 2021

A new study of more than 300,000 Vietnam-era U.S. veterans has found that those who were exposed to Agent Orange are nearly twice as likely to develop dementia as those who were not.

The new finding, published in JAMA Neurology, is among the most substantial to date linking cognitive decline with chemicals used for defoliation during the Vietnam War.

According to Deborah Barnes, a researcher with the University of California San Francisco and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the study authors found that, over the course of time, 5% of veterans with a documented exposure to Agent Orange were diagnosed with dementia compared with 2.5% of vets with no known exposure.

For the study, the researchers reviewed the medical records of Vietnam veterans who received care through the Veterans Health Administration from Oct. 1, 2001, to Sept. 30, 2015. They excluded anyone already diagnosed with dementia and those whose Agent Orange exposure was unclear.

To read the article on the MOAA website, click this [link](#).

Bipartisan Legislation Would Fix TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap

By: Karen Ruedisueli | February 3, 2021

A bipartisan bill would expand TRICARE eligibility to young adult dependents up to age 26, fixing an eligibility gap between TRICARE and commercial plans that has existed for a decade.

The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021 (H.R. 475), introduced by Reps. Elaine Luria (D-Va.) and Michael Waltz (R-Fla.), would correct this concern at a critical time – COVID-19 has underscored the need for young adult health care coverage as the pandemic has upended higher education plans and made it more difficult for young adults to find jobs.

Commercial plans are required by law to make coverage available until adult children turn 26. For military families, TRICARE coverage ends at age 21, or age 23 if the child is a full-time college student.

Since its inception in 2012, TYA premiums have increased dramatically, leading to lower enrollment and a beneficiary pool skewed toward those with chronic medical conditions. TYA Prime premiums are up 160% since 2012 (an average annual increase of 14%) while the cost of TYA Select has grown 69% (up 7% per year, on average). These increases call the future viability of this premium-based plan into question.

Click this [link](#) for the complete article.

St. Clair County Tweaks COVID Vaccine Process After Ineligible People Made Appointments

(excerpt from Belleville News Democrat article)

St. Clair County officials said Saturday they are making changes to COVID-19 vaccination scheduling a day after hundreds of ineligible people made appointments.

The county is changing how it contacts eligible residents to schedule appointments after they sign up for the St. Clair County vaccine waitlist, according to Simmons. (Join the waitlist through a form available online at [health.co.st-clair.il.us](https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/) or by calling 618-825-4447.)

<https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>



Southwest Illinois Chapter
Military Officers Association of America
P.O. Box 735
O'Fallon IL 62269

Meeting Announcement

This Month's Meeting has been cancelled due to the current pandemic restrictions and an abundance of caution.